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Sermon on the Gospel for the Tenth Sunday after Trinity.

LUKE 19, 41—48.

The eighth chapter of the Second Book of the Kings tells us of Elisha's visit to Damascus. Elisha was a prophet of God, and the continuator of the great Prophet Elijah's campaign against the Baal cult. When he came to the city of Damascus, Benhadad, the King of Syria, was a very sick man. Somebody told him that Elisha had come to the city. The sick king then sent Hazael—whom Elijah had anointed king in Benhadad's stead, 1 Kings 19, 15—to the prophet, saying, "Take a present in thine hand, and go, meet the man of God, and enquire of the Lord by him, saying, Shall I recover of this disease?" Hazael did as the king had commanded him to do. He took with him a present, forty camels' burden of every good thing of Damascus. When he had found the man of God, he said to him, "Thy son Benhadad, King of Syria, hath sent me to thee, saying, Shall I recover of this disease? And Elisha said unto him, Go, say unto him, Thou mayest certainly recover; howbeit, the Lord hath showed me that he shall surely die. And he settled his countenance steadfastly, until he was ashamed. And the man of God *wept*. And Hazael said, Why *weepeth* my lord?" Did Elisha answer his question? Indeed, he answered it. What answer did he give him? Listen! He said, "Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel: their strongholds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child."

Elisha loved the children of Israel, the Jews. He faithfully preached the Word of God to them. He entreated them to serve Jehovah and not Baal. But they would not. They cared not for his love, they heeded not his entreaties, and they feared not his warnings.

Alas, they knew not the time of their gracious visitation! Therefore the Prophet Elisha *wept*.

Nine hundred years afterwards a *Greater One* than Elisha *wept* over the same people. Our Gospel-lesson tells us that Jesus wept over Jerusalem, *i. e.*, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Jews. The evangelist says: "And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it." Why did He weep? By the assistance of . . . answer the question:

WHY DID JESUS WEEP OVER JERUSALEM?

1. *Because Jerusalem knew not the time of its gracious visitation;*
2. *Because Jerusalem hastened the time of its awful destruction.*

1.

'Twas an awful thing—the fall of man! By his fall man and his posterity were alienated from God. The fall changed the very nature of man. The fall of man made children of wrath and condemnation out of God's children. But—O the graciousness of God! God promised to fallen man a Savior. By the mouth of His prophets He promised to send His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, who should save His people from their sins. God fulfilled His promises. He could not do otherwise, for He cannot lie. In the fullness of time He sent His Son, being born of a woman. The eternal Word was made flesh and dwelt among men. At the time of His incarnation an angel appeared to the lowly shepherds who were watching their flocks in the vicinity of Bethlehem, and he gladdened their hearts, saying, "Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." And when the angel had proclaimed his tidings of great joy, the whole host of good angels surrounded the shepherds, and chanted the wonderful Christmas-carol, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men," into their ears and hearts.

What sweeter music could they bring
Than a carol for to sing
The birth of this their heavenly King!

This heavenly King of angel and man, this incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ, had come to save that which was lost—to save fallen, sinful, lost mankind by the shedding of His precious blood; for without the shedding of *His* blood there was no salvation for sinners. Only the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sins.

And now, beloved friends, the time had come in which the all-sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the lost world was to be offered by Him on the altar of the cross,—He Himself being that sacrifice. "Behold," said He to His disciples, who accompanied Him on His

last journey to the city, "we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished. For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on; and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death; and the third day He shall rise again," Luke 18, 31—33.

"And when He was come near," the evangelist tells us in our Gospel-lesson, "He beheld the city, and *wept* over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes. For . . . thy visitation," vv. 41—44. The dear Savior wept over the inhabitants of Jerusalem, because they knew not the day of their gracious visitation. Indeed, the Jews in general, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem in particular, had their "day of visitation," but in their spiritual blindness they did not see the things which belonged to their eternal peace. The Savior came unto His own, and they received Him not.

Jesus Christ was not a stranger to the Jews, for St. Matthew writes: "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. And His fame went throughout all Syria. And they brought unto Him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and He healed them. And there followed Him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan," Matt. 4, 23—25. Yea, even more, He also raised up some of their dead. At Nain He touched the bier that enclosed the corpse of a widow's son, and he came to life again. The poor widow's tears were dried. At Capernaum He said to the dead daughter of Jairus: "Talitha, cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise! And straightway the damsel arose and walked," Mark 5, 41. 42. And at Bethany He said unto His friend Lazarus, who had been dead four days, "Lazarus, come forth!" "And he that was dead came forth," John 11, 43. "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which," says St. John, "if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written," John 21, 25.

And how did He *preach*? St. Mark writes: "And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the Sabbath He entered into the synagogue, and taught. And they were astonished at His doctrine; for He taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes," Mark 1, 21. 22. And, besides all this, *He was the only one whom they could not convince of a sin.* Verily, my friends, Jesus Christ proved

beyond any reasonable doubt that He was in deed and in truth the Son of God and the Savior of the World. But, with a few exceptions, the Jews would not believe on Him. "They were leagued in a dark covenant to crucify the Son of God. Looking down on Jerusalem, and making great lamentation over it, the ground of His grief was, not that they had sinned and so brought on themselves condemnation—in that there was nothing peculiar to Jerusalem;—what makes Him weep is, that they will not accept redemption at His hands." (*Sermon Bible*, vol. 7, p. 303.)

Not only the Jewish nation had its time of gracious divine visitation, but also many others. The inhabitants of every country, community, and city in which the Gospel of Christ is preached experience a time of gracious visitation. But, alas! many, like the Jews of the Savior's day, do not know the time of their visitation. They do not repent of their sins, do not embrace the Savior by true faith, and do not honor Him by leading a Christian life. Like the Jews they are self-righteous, self-complacent, and self-satisfied. They will not be saved by the only Savior. Oh, how sad! Jesus must weep over them as He wept over Jerusalem, because they know not the day of their visitation. They neglect their own salvation. Jesus time and again knocks at the door of their heart, He implores them to accept Him as their Savior, but they do not care for Him. He would save them, but they will not be saved. With a heavy heart and with tears in His eyes He must cry out: "How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!" Luke 13, 34. Yea, each individual person has a day of visitation. Every one that has ever heard a Gospel sermon has had his day of gracious visitation. This very hour in which you are listening to a Gospel sermon is *your* day of visitation.

My dear friends, how are you spending your day of gracious visitation? Are you spending it like the inhabitants of Jerusalem in our Savior's day, and like so many others in our own time? Are you trifling with your soul's salvation? Are you neglecting the things which belong to your eternal peace? If you do, then, beloved friends, Jesus Christ, your Savior, must weep over you, not only because you do not know the time of your gracious visitation, but also because you are hastening the time of your awful destruction.

2.

The evangelist tells us in our Gospel-lesson: "And when He was come near . . . because thou knowest not the time of thy visitation," vv. 42—44. The day of God's gracious visitation, *if neglected*, begets the day of awful punishment and destruction. It cannot be otherwise, because God is just and holy; He will not be mocked. This

Jesus knew; and He foresaw the impending day of God's awful wrath over an unbelieving and ungrateful people.

What the Savior foresaw He cried out in lamentation. And what He predicted, with tearful eyes and quavering voice, came to pass. His doleful prophecies concerning Jerusalem were all fulfilled in their minutest details. About thirty-seven years afterwards, the Romans, under the leadership of Titus, destroyed the city of Jerusalem. Josephus, a Jewish historian, tells us that, when the great walls of the city had been battered down, the Romans besieged the temple. Titus very much desired to spare the sacred structure, but one of his soldiers cast a firebrand into one of the windows, and the entire edifice was soon in flames. A terrible massacre followed. The Romans gave no quarter, and many thousands of Jews perished by fire and sword, or by suicide in casting themselves headlong from the battlements. This scene of slaughter lasted several days, until Jerusalem was left entirely desolate. Ninety-seven thousand Jews were made prisoners, and eleven thousand of these were starved to death. During the five months of the siege there perished at Jerusalem, by famine, pestilence, fire, and sword, more than a million of Jews.

When the victorious Romans had finished their destructive work of burning and slaughter, Titus ordered the whole city to be leveled with the ground, excepting a part of the western wall and three towers, which he left as memorials of his conquest. His orders were promptly executed. Mount Zion was plowed as a field and strewn over with salt, and the temple was leveled with the ground. The Jews have ever since been dispersed among all nations. Thus ended the history of the Jewish people as a nation.

Had the Jews truly repented of their sins, God would have forgiven them. But they did not repent. Jesus knew that, with a few exceptions, they would not repent; He also knew that for this very reason the awful destruction of Jerusalem could not be averted. Nineveh, the great but wicked city, repented when Jonah preached the wrath of God against it, and God had mercy upon the Ninivites and did not destroy them. Here was a Greater One than Jonah, the Son of God Himself, who preached repentance unto the Jews. Still they would not repent. And therefore Jesus wept over the city of Jerusalem. Jesus loved the Jews as He loves all people. He longed to save them; but they would not be saved. The poor Jews! To this very day they have hardened their hearts in hatred against the Savior of the world. Only now and then a few embrace Him by true faith and honor Him with a Christian life. Only a few are saved.

Some one might ask himself, What became of the Christians that lived in that doomed city? My friend, Eusebius the historian tells us that they received divine instructions to leave the city before

the Romans laid siege to it. They went to a city called Pella, which was located in the northern part of Perea, on the east side of the river Jordan. Yea, God is able to save His people!

If men neglect the things that belong to their eternal peace, then Jesus weeps over them, because God's wrath and punishments are to come upon them. No one can sin with impunity. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked!" Gal. 6, 7. None of those who do not truly repent will go unpunished. The day of wrath will consume them. On that day, the day of final judgment, all things will be righted. Then woe unto those who have neglected the day of their gracious visitation! Let us, then, my friends, take warning!

If we would escape the awful wrath and punishments of a holy and just God on the Day of Judgment, we must go to Jesus for help. If we will only go to Him in true faith and repentance, He will gladly accept us; for He has said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Matt. 11, 28. And again: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out," John 6, 37. Yea, if we will only embrace Him by true faith, rely and trust in Him in life and in death, then, beloved friends, He will shed tears of joy over us,—and in the final awful destruction He will take us to the "Pella of safety," *i. e.*, to the eternal city of God, not made with hands, to the Jerusalem above that shall be forevermore! O Lord Jesus!—

While I draw this fleeting breath,
When my eyelids close in death,
When I soar to worlds unknown,
See Thee on Thy judgment throne,
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee!

Amen.

J. H. H.

Sermon on the Gospel for the Eleventh Sunday after Trinity.

LUKE 18, 9—14.

If a man would be saved and go to heaven, it is necessary for him to be justified beforehand. That is to say, God must first declare him perfectly just and righteous, must blot out all his sins, not a single one excepted. For He is not a God that has pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with Him. Nothing unclean can enter into the kingdom of heaven. Just as little as you can unite fire and water or darkness and light, just as little can a man whose sins still

rest upon him enter into communion with God, who is the fire that consumes all iniquity, and the pure light of holiness.

For this reason God has given to man His holy Law, from which we can learn what we must do to live in accordance with His will. If a man fulfills this Law perfectly, he is just and holy in the sight of God. But if he does not fulfill it,—and nobody does!—then he must be justified. This Law of God must stand. Not one jot of it can pass away and remain unfulfilled. Even Christ says of Himself that He did not come to destroy the Law and the prophets, but rather to fulfill it. So if a man has not a righteousness which is perfectly in harmony with this divine Law, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.

It is foolish, therefore, for people to imagine that, because they try to live a virtuous and honorable life, God will overlook their little, insignificant shortcomings, and for the sake of their many good and virtuous deeds will permit them to enter heaven. It is true, God is love; He loves man, sinful man, more than one man can love another, and for this reason He wishes to save all men. But God is also righteous, and the claims of His justice must be satisfied, just as well as those of His love. And because all men have trespassed against His justice by their sins, they must be justified, their transgressions against divine justice must be taken away, before the love of God can assume its sway over them and take them to heaven. God is not like a weak mother that threatens to punish the disobedience of her naughty child, but whose courage fails her when it comes to the execution of her threat, so that she drops the rod and permits the little culprit to go unpunished. Nay, it is not so with God. When He threatens in His Law to punish all sins, He will and must do so. His justice must be satisfied.

But now the question arises, If no man naturally possesses the righteousness required by God's Law, if, according to Scriptures, all men have sinned and come short of the glory of God, what, then, must sinful man do in order to be justified in the sight of God and go to heaven? Ah, if every man must pray with the Psalmist: "Lord, enter not into judgment with Thy servant, for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified!" how can the judgment of God be averted? Christ, our Lord, teaches us in to-day's Gospel-lesson, by the parable of the Pharisee and publican, what we must do. For He says at the end of this parable: "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other." Let us, then, as did Mary at Bethany, sit at the feet of Jesus as He teaches us

WHAT WE MUST DO IN ORDER TO BE JUSTIFIED.

Let us learn

1. *From the Pharisee what we must not do, and*
2. *From the publican what we must do, in order to be justified.*

1.

Christ concludes the parable with the words: "I tell you, this man," the publican, "went down to his house justified, rather than the other," the Pharisee; "for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." When the Lord says that the publican was justified rather than the Pharisee, this does not mean that the latter was also justified in a special sense and to a certain degree, but that the former was justified more perfectly; no, there are no degrees in justification: either a man is totally justified, so that God accounts no sin to him, or he is not justified at all. As long as one single sin is still resting upon a man, he is not justified, for one sin subjects him to God's wrath and punishment. "Whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." So, then, the words of our Lord simply mean this, that the publican was justified totally and perfectly, whereas the Pharisee was not justified at all, but all his sins rested upon him. And our Lord states the reason for this. "For," He says, "every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." The Pharisee, as the parable shows, exalted himself, and therefore must be abased by God. God did not justify him, but judged him for his sins, and would inflict His punishment upon him, while the publican humbled himself and was thus exalted. God forgave him his sins, justified him, and opened heaven to him.

Let us, then, learn, in the first place, what the self-exaltation of the Pharisee consisted in, so that we may avoid his grievous mistake. Christ says of him in the parable: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican." So in this he and the publican were both alike: they both went into the temple to pray. And yet one of them was justified, while the other was not. Mark! In order to be a Christian, to receive justification, we must go to the temple, must worship God, must hear His Word. But this is not enough. Mere outward or false worship does not justify. This we learn from the Pharisee. He also went to the temple—that was right; yet he was not justified, because his worship was a false one.

Hear what our Lord says of him: "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." Look at him coming into the temple, strutting through the assembled people up to the front part of the hall, ascending the elevated platform, with a holy mien raising his eyes heavenward, while his hands are crossed upon his breast! And now listen to his prayer: "God, I thank Thee," etc. Oh, what a holy man he must be! The eyes of the assembled people

look up to him with awe and reverence, and the one thought pervades the hearts of all present: If I were only as good and holy as he! Surely, he must be acceptable to God and certain of heaven!

Perhaps this wish has also risen in the hearts of some of you, my hearers. Well for you if it has. A Christian must avoid sin and strive after holiness and virtue. But beware, beware of imitating the Pharisee in the other respect: of putting your trust for heaven in your own righteousness! Remember the warning words of Christ: I tell you, this man was not justified! "For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased." He exalts himself; he recounts before God all the evil that he has omitted, and makes particular mention of the fact that he is no extortioner, who tries to wrest money from his fellow-beings by shameful usury, no unjust man, but a man that deals fairly with every one, no adulterer, but chaste in all his words and deeds, nor even as the publican, that low-bred, fraudulent rascal. He furthermore enumerates all the good he has done; he fasts twice in the week, and so does much more than the Law imposed, which required only one day of fasting in the year, and gave tithes of all that he possessed, even of all those small, insignificant trifles which were not mentioned in the Law at all. Thus he exalts himself above his fellow-men, who did not and could not live up to these outward requirements of the Law as he did. He tells his God what a good and holy man he is, whom He surely cannot reject, but is obliged to take into heaven. But this is a terrible mistake. God will do nothing of the kind. On the contrary, He will reject him; he is not justified, because he exalts himself. The prayer which he offers is not a prayer at all, but an abomination. It only bears the external appearance of a prayer, while it lacks the spirit of true worship. It is nothing but an extolling of his own self. For although he addresses himself to God and seemingly thanks Him for his holiness, in reality he ascribes it all to himself and therefore only thanks God that he has nothing to thank Him for.

Do you think God could justify him? No, he could not. He must cast him down from the exalted position which he had mounted in his wicked self-conceit. He must abase him. Consider a moment what this man was doing: he was trying to feed God with the husks of mere external goodness and righteousness. All the works of virtue and of abstinence from evil which he mentions in his prayer are only such as appear outwardly before men. He says nothing of the condition of his heart. Inwardly he may have been full of filthy greed, of evil lust and of a desire for riotous living. With all his outward show of holiness he may have been, and in all probability was, full of the most impure thoughts, nothing but an abominable hypocrite. But oh! it is the heart, the heart, which God requires. "I, the Lord, search the heart," He says; "I try the reins, even to give every man

according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings." As long as the heart is not sanctified by the work of the Holy Spirit, the outward life may be ever so holy and virtuous, it is nothing but an abomination in the sight of God.

O let us learn from the example of this Pharisee what we must avoid if we would be justified. We must guard against comparing ourselves with other men who have outwardly not lived such a virtuous life as we did. We must not trust in the fact that we have abstained from all that is evil and performed that which is good. Our sinful heart likes to reason with the Pharisee: Why, I am much better than this or that one. I never cheated any one; I have been just and kind in my dealings with every one; I never lived in gross deeds of immorality, but kept myself chaste in words and deeds. Moreover, I always gave God His due; I always attended church regularly, and paid what I could towards its maintenance. Ah, such comparison with others, such trust in our faultless life is dangerous, aye, perilous. That is exalting ourselves, and, mark well: those who thus exalt themselves shall be abased. They will not go down justified to their homes.

2.

Now let us learn, in the second place, from the example of the publican, what we must do in order to be justified. Christ says of him: "And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me, a sinner!"

So this publican, upon coming into the temple, did not follow the Pharisee to the conspicuous place on the front platform; nay, he stood afar off, in some nook or corner of the temple, hidden from the view of the people. He did not wish to be seen by the other worshipers, but was ashamed to expose himself to their inquiring looks. And not only was he ashamed before man, but also before God: he would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven. His conscience smote him on account of his sins, and in the bitterness of his penitence he cast down his eyes to the ground. And he smote upon his breast, signifying that he well knew he deserved God's eternal punishments. Such external signs of repentance are not exactly essential to true repentance. Some may not feel the weight of their guilt as heavily as he did, or may not have the power to show their feeling outwardly, although their heart is bleeding with bitterness and grief. Again, others may deport themselves very humbly and lowly, and yet be as haughty and self-righteous as the Pharisee was, making only an outward show of repentance. Do not think, therefore, that whenever you notice a person showing these signs, you may be sure of seeing a penitent sinner, or that he who does not show them must

be an impenitent Pharisee. And also be on your guard with regard to yourselves, lest you mistake such outward actions on your part for true penitence. The devil likes to make us believe in such a case that we are like the publican, and there is great danger that we become proud of being so humble! But although we must be very careful not to mistake such outward humble appearance for true humbleness and repentance of the heart, yet it is true that a haughty bearing is almost invariably the expression of a haughty, Pharisaic heart, and that a truly repentant heart most generally shows itself, more or less, in the external conduct, too.

Now listen to the prayer of the publican: "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" That is all he can say and dares say. That is a very short prayer, my dear hearers; it consists of seven words only. And yet it is very long, for it contains all that such a prayer needs to and must contain. It is a very simple prayer. It has nothing of the vaunting and flaunting bombast which the Pharisee put into his would-be prayer. It is made up of short, common words known to every child. But ah! it conveys a sweetness of meaning and a fullness of childlike trust and confidence. I am sure it sounded like music in the ears of God, and He looked down upon the publican with an eye of fatherly love and pleasure. Let us examine the prayer a little closer.

"God," he says. He also addresses himself to his God. But he does not thank Him for anything; he does not count up any good deeds of virtues to Him. Nay, his is a supplication; he asks something from Him. "God," he says, "be merciful to me, a sinner!" He calls himself a sinner. That is all he has to say about himself. He can see nothing but his sins. He knows he has led a most detestable life. He has cheated his fellow-men; he has probably been wicked in other respects; he has led a life of vice and immorality, and has done nothing whatever that is good even in the sight of men. He has neglected the temple and worship, has never contributed a particle of his worldly goods towards God's kingdom and the maintenance of the poor. No, nothing but evil has he done. He is a sinner, a miserable, abominable, detestable sinner, fully deserving God's wrath and the eternal flames of hell. That is all he knows to say of himself. And therefore he does not, like the Pharisee, appeal to God's justice, knowing that he can only expect condemnation from that source; nay, he takes his refuge to God's love and mercy. "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" Mercy, nothing but mercy, is what he craves. That is his only hope, that out of mercy, undeserved, infinite mercy, God will accept even him and forgive his sins. For he knows from the Word of God that He is merciful, that He will forgive sin, and finds no pleasure in punishing the sinner, and so, in childlike confidence, he trusts that He will also have mercy on

him, though he is such a great sinner, though his whole life has been one continuous sin.

And remember what Christ says of this man: "He went down to his house justified. For he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Let us learn from this publican, then, what we also must do to be justified by God. We must confess before God that we are sinners, that we are great sinners; yea, each one must consider himself the greatest of all sinners; he must confess with Paul that he is the chief of sinners. For although our external life may be more honorable than that of other men, though we may be considered better than they by our fellow-men, yet before God we are no better than the vilest criminal; we are all sin and nothing but sin. And truly, if we turn our eyes away from our external life to the inner life, the thoughts and emotions of our heart, we will find sin and nothing but sin within us, and we will never have any time to compare ourselves with others, but all our time will be occupied with fighting against and lamenting our own depravity; we will learn to consider ourselves the greatest of all sinners, bare, totally bare, of anything that might make us acceptable in the sight of God. And then we will learn with the publican to take refuge to the mercy of God, and to it alone, to that mercy which has redeemed us from sin by the blood of our Savior. Yea, we will learn to pray: God, be merciful, for Jesus' sake be merciful to me, a poor, miserable, damnable sinner! Amen.

G. L.

Sermon Outlines.

Eighth Sunday after Trinity.

MATT. 7, 15—23.

Indifference concerning doctrine is a characteristic feature of our times. *Indications*: the widespread opinion that it matters not what a person believes, if he only sticks to his belief and lives up to it. *Fruits*: doctrinal differences regarded as non-essential; tendency to bring about cooperation of churches without doctrinal consensus; pulpit-fellowship and open communion; interdenominational exchange of pastors; the Laymen's Missionary Movement, etc. *Promotion*: by books and periodicals; by societies, such as Y. M. C. A., Soc. C. E., International Sunday-School Union, etc. *Justification*: as a work done in the interest of peace and brotherly love.

But the thing is not what it seems. It is a cry of, "Peace, peace!" where there is no peace. It seems to promote brotherly love, but it is at the expense of the fear and love of God and His Word, which

should be paramount to every other consideration. Indifference, etc., is not a virtue, but a grievous sin, to be guarded against for the sake of our souls.

THE SIN OF INDIFFERENCE CONCERNING DOCTRINE AND BELIEF.

1. *Prove that such indifference is indeed sin.*
2. *Show how we are to guard against that sin.*

1.

Text: v. 15.

a. This is a warning — indicates danger — emanating from “false prophets,” *i. e.*, teachers — not their person, but doctrine. “Beware,” be on your guard! Do not think there is no danger; be not heedless, not indifferent. “Beware” — of what? Of believing and following their teaching. Hence, a warning against indifference, etc.

b. Is there any need of such warning at present? *a.* Are there false prophets now? Certainly; at all times. Not only in Old Testament days (Deut. 13, 1—3, etc.), or at the time of Christ (text) and apostles (Rom. 16, 17, 18; 1 John 4, 1), but also in latter days (2 Pet. 2, 1; cf. v. 9; Matt. 24, 24). *b.* Why, then, are people so heedless of, so dubious about, the existence of danger? Because of the “sheep’s clothing.” What is the “sheep’s clothing”? It consists in words (see Luther, St. L. ed. VII, 630, § 107) and actions, *e. g.*, their multifarious activity in all kinds of reform movements, social and political; institutional churches (see *Lutheraner* 1909, p. 230 f.); interdenominational fraternization; prayer on all occasions, at political meetings, all kinds of public gatherings and public exercises of every description (graduating, etc.), legislative assemblies; ability to make *long* prayers; foreign missions. (Read Luther, l. c., § 108.)

c. If Christ warns against indifference, is it not a *sin* then to be indifferent? *a.* It is a sin against God. The true doctrine is divine revelation of the mysteries of the divine counsels for our salvation and their execution. Every revealed doctrine is from God and therefore important. But the false prophets substitute their own opinions for divine revelations, thus dishonoring the Word of God. *b.* But the warning is sounded chiefly for our sake, because of danger to our souls — “ravening wolves.” The central doctrine: justification by grace, etc. — its purpose, our salvation; and this is perverted by false prophets. And even if they pervert only one of the minor doctrines, this bears some relation to that central doctrine. It is the keystone, but not the only stone in the arch. Just as the removal of one of the stones which support it will cause the keystone and the whole arch to fall; just as the removal of the rafters will cause the beam and entire roof to fall, so —. Every doctrine of Scripture is important,

and Christ warns us against indifference concerning any one of them. Those who pervert them are "ravening wolves." We are in danger of destruction. Therefore, to be indifferent is a grievous sin. — And yet Christians are so careless. (Read Luther, l. c., 629, §§ 104. 105.)

2.

Text: vv. 16—20.

a. If we are to beware, we must be able to distinguish. By what? "Fruits." a. What are the fruits? Chiefly their doctrine; also their works. (Luther, l. c., 638, § 123.) Text, v. 21. b. By what standard are the fruits to be judged? By the Word of God. (Luther, l. c., 639, §§ 124. 126. 127. 129.) Many of the *works* also of false prophets that give them an air of sanctity (cf. 1. b. b.), if properly judged by this standard, will prove deficient; cf. Acts 6, 2. Hence —

b. If we are to judge, we must have a thorough knowledge of sound doctrine. (Luther, l. c., 630, § 106; 631, § 110; 640, §§ 128. 130.) — Show importance of catechetical instruction and remembering it — the catechetical services, etc.

In conclusion, exhort to adhere to the pure doctrine and to avoid false doctrine; not to forget the teachings of the Catechism; to diligently search the Scriptures and to grow in knowledge; to apply the standard carefully to every man's teaching, and to beware of indifference.

J. F. KARL SCHMIDT.

Ninth Sunday after Trinity.

1 COR. 10, 6—13.

Confidence and security are most important terms to the Christian. They express, in the first place, that relation of the entire heart to the saving grace of God, and that state of grace, when the sinner knows and trusts himself to be safe from the accusations and curses of the divine Law, of his own conscience, and of Satan. He has accepted with a heart of faith the pardon of God in the Gospel for Christ's sake, and he has entered into peace with God, Rom. 5, 1, a peace that passeth all understanding, Phil. 4, 7. This is the divinely wrought confidence and security of the justified. This is what constitutes a person a Christian, and nothing else does. If this confidence and security is destroyed in the individual Christian, he ceases to be a Christian; if it were shattered in all Christians, if it were proved a delusion, there would be an end of the Christian Church. To retain this confidence and security inviolate and inviolable, is the sole aim of the personal struggles of individual Christians in their state of grace, and of the united warfare which the entire Church wages against the enemies of that peace which

Christ wrought, which the Gospel offers, which the Spirit works in our hearts.—But there is a confidence and security against which Scripture warns the very people who have entered in the kingdom of the Prince of Peace. It is a confidence and security that will wreck all the work of grace in a person's heart, if one yields to it. The causes, forms, and effects of this evil and fatal security we are invited to study by the text before us. The prominent thought in this text we place at the head of our discourse:

“LET HIM THAT THINKETH HE STANDETH TAKE HEED
LEST HE FALL!”

1. *For grace is not license to “lust after evil things.”* vv. 6—11.

The apostle had depicted the gracious state of God's ancient covenant people. The people whom God led out of Egyptian bondage were richly blessed: God was in the midst of them; the Redeemer's work was being witnessed to them by their church-ordinances; their souls and bodies were being fed by God's bounty, and sheltered by His mighty protection. Every condition of ease and happiness was secured for them. But results occurred which, we imagine, could not possibly have followed upon such conditions: “they were overthrown in the wilderness,” and that because God was not well pleased with them.

Now, God is always pleased with His own work. His eye delights to behold the work of His grace in the hearts of His children. But His sore displeasure is excited when He beholds in those who boast the possession of His grace acts which contradict the very essence of His grace. “Lusting after evil things” the apostle calls it. To illustrate, he cites the idolatry of Israel at Sinai, and elsewhere, on their journey, with the profligate practices which attended idol-worship; he cites the rebellious spirit which led them to question the wisdom and goodness of the Angel of the Lord, Christ, who was guiding them out of bondage and poverty to freedom and plenty; which caused them to doubt and deny, in a sullen and contumacious spirit, the willingness and the ability of the Lord to make good His promises to them; and which incited them to assume a hostile attitude towards their appointed captain and teacher, Moses and Aaron.

These things were possible then, and they are possible now. The apostle argues that the sorry experiences of the fathers ought to be a warning to the children. The world has not changed except to the worse, as the end is approaching. And the natural heart of man is never crushed by grace in such a manner as not to exist any longer. If any present-day Christian imagines that the idolatry round about, the lewdness of the world, which he cannot but perceive, could never entice him, let him remember that these things came

out of just such hearts as his own is by nature, and the old lusts can spring up in him again, be nursed and petted and fondled, while all the time he is pleased to consider himself basking in the grace and good pleasure of his Lord. Or the ways which Providence leads him may appear entirely wrong to his natural judgment and inclination, and the old heart in him may begin to grumble and protest, and finally break forth in open rebellion. And—strange delusion!—he may even on such occasions pride himself on being a Christian.

Many have fallen who thought they were standing. They had fallen in the judgment and estimation of the Lord before their fall was discovered by men. These things have happened for ensamples to us. Grace, pardon, peace in Christ Jesus, our Lord, are blessed realities. And our confidence and security in them is no empty dream. But grace is the contradictory of sin. Grace and the lust of evil things cannot dwell in the same heart. Christians may be duped by their own treacherous carnal heart into believing this to be possible, but the belief is a lie; for grace never is license to sin.

2. For grace is not immunity from trials. v. 13.

There are temptations in this life that are common to all men. Distress, sickness, loss of fortune or fame, etc., have happened to good Christians without any discoverable fault of their own, often through the faults of others. Besides, in His mysterious pedagogy to which God subjects His children, trials form an important element. True, He determines form, duration, and intensity of every affliction, and He has ordained the hour and the mode of deliverance beforehand. But it is only by grace that the Christian grasps them and makes them his light in sorrow and his sheet-anchor in the storm of affliction. Grace is the counterpart of merit. Grace excludes self-esteem, self-confidence. Grace always begets a humble, suppliant, and trustful attitude toward God—the attitude of Abraham on Mount Moriah.

Those who think differently of the temptations and trials of a Christian's faith in this life are on the verge of their spiritual ruin. Flowery beds of ease were never the appointed lot and exclusive privilege of the Christian. He was never taught endurance, patience, courage, perseverance through being a pampered child. Grace does not spoil, but train, God's children.—

Let us rejoice in the confidence and security which Christ has gained for us. Let us avoid every other confidence and security. Ps. 2, 11.
